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DE RUEHKT #0930/01 2821219

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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0882

INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7153

RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 7487

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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4795

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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3684

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFIS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000930

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/15/2019

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOIST COMBATANTS TO BE DISCHARGED - MAYBE

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires, a.i., Jeffrey A. Moon. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶11. (SBU) Summary: Under a new agreement between the Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction and the Maoists, the discharge process for disqualified Maoist combatants is scheduled to restart with a high-level joint visit to a cantonment on October 11. The Ministry hopes to transfer all disqualified combatants into transition centers by November 19. The previous agreement on discharging collapsed in July after it became clear the Maoists were not sincere. It is unclear to what extent the Maoist will support this new plan, despite Peace Ministry claims a breakthrough consensus has been reached. End Summary.

LITMUS TEST VISIT ON OCTOBER 11

¶12. (C) UNMIN confirmed there will be visit to a cantonment site on October 11 to kick off the new process. The Peace Minister, Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) Deputy Commander Khanal, UNMIN, UNDP, and UNICEF officials plan to be in attendance. (Note: UNICEF provides assistance to the disqualified combatants who are minors, and will be involved in the retraining programs for the minors. End note.) The previous visit to meet with disqualified combatants July 17 was a disaster; the group questioned why they had been disqualified and demanded to be integrated into the Nepal Army. Government officials and UNMIN blamed the Maoists for orchestrating the opposition and not sending a high-level Maoist official to signal support. This time the Maoists have agreed to send Deputy Commander Khanal, and have told the Peace Ministry that they will make it clear to the disqualified that it is time to leave the cantonments.

¶13. (C) UNMIN officials stated the Maoists were allowed to choose the site for the October 11 visit, Cantonment Site 2 in Sindhuli, and hope it will be a less hostile crowd. 375 disqualified combatants are registered in the camp, but UNMIN estimates that there are only 250 remaining. Other cantonments have possibly seen similar levels of abandonment by the disqualified.

PURPORTED CONSENSUS

¶14. (C) Under the plan, the government will create a high-level committee to finalize the details and administer the discharge process. The disqualified combatants will move

from cantonments sites to retraining facilities, where they will receive skills training. UNDP's Michael Brown and UNICEF officials told emboffs October 8 that retraining proposals are in place, but the Peace Ministry will ultimately coordinate implementation. Brown said the most important part of the October 11 visit is to determine what type of training the disqualified combatants want, a conversation that has been blocked by the Maoists until now.

UNMIN HAS DOUBTS, BUT IS HOPEFUL NONETHELESS

¶ 15. (C) UNMIN Special Representative Karin Landgren, in a meeting with diplomats on October 8, expressed very guarded optimism that the new plan has a better chance of success than earlier ones. She attended the Peace Ministry's negotiations and reported that the Maoists agreed for the first time to appoint specific individuals, PLA Deputy Commander, Chandra Prakash Khanal "Baldev" and Kul Prasad K.C. "Sonam", to serve as representatives to the discharge committee. Landgren expressed disappointment that many details remained up in the air, but said that if the parties waited for specifics the discharge process would never get off the ground.

¶ 16. (C) When asked how to measure success for the October 11 trip, UNMIN said it was hoping for a joint statement with the Maoists after the trip's completion. Landgren was not willing to predict success, except to say, "We've got to give it another try, and see what happens." Landgren said there is no reason to believe the process will be completed by

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November 19.

¶ 17. (C) Comment: Post is skeptical of Maoist intentions towards this latest discharge plan. The naming of high profile Maoists to promote the discharge plan to the disqualified combatants is a positive step. Even if the process gets underway however, the Maoists could still drag it out well into next year if they choose. Post also notes that the last flurry of activity around the discharge process occurred in the weeks before the UNSC was to review UNMIN's mission. Perhaps not coincidentally, the UNSC will discuss Nepal again on November 6. End Comment.

MOON